

F.F. BRUCE

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F.F. (FREDERICK FYVIE) BRUCE (1910-1990) was an influential textual scholar who denied the eternal fire of the biblical Hell and promoted the damnable annihilation theory of judgment. Bruce claimed that Paul's writings restricting women from the leadership positions in the churches was "merely a statement of practice for a particular time." A popular commentary series edited by F.F. Bruce and William Barclay (Abingdon Press) is full of modernistic thought and historical-critical mumbo-jumbo. In the volume dealing with Daniel and Revelation, the book of Daniel is said to have been written AFTER the fulfillment of the events prophesied therein. In the same volume we are told that we cannot know who authored the book of Daniel (though Jesus Christ said Daniel wrote it). The volume on 1 and 2 Timothy claims that an unknown author wrote these letters in Paul's name. The volume on Isaiah claims there were three authors of Isaiah. The Lord Jesus Christ quoted from both major portions of Isaiah and attributed the book to the ONE historical prophet, but the commentary series edited by Bruce and Barclay make Christ a liar by claiming there were three Isaiahs!

In *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, which was originally published in 1943, and which was reprinted in 1992 by InterVarsity Press and Eerdmans Publishing, Bruce attempts to describe the facts surrounding the authorship and canonization of Scripture. He says:

"The historic Christian belief is that the Holy Spirit, who controlled the writing of the individual books, also controlled their selection and collection, thus continuing to fulfil our Lord's promise that He would guide His disciples into all truth. This, however, is something that is to be discerned by spiritual insight, and not by historical research. Our object is to find out what historical research reveals about the origin of the New Testament canon" (Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, p. 21).

Having mentioned biblical inspiration in passing, Bruce then launches out into the deep of today's textual scholarship, attempting to discern who wrote the books of the Bible, when, and how. He rejects the more radical modernistic approaches to the New Testament Scriptures, and he makes a few sound observations; but he exalts "form criticism," which attempts to discover the alleged sources for the Gospels.

The world of "evangelical" textual scholarship supposedly rejects the conclusions of the modernistic critics, while giving credence to the methodology of these critics. This is contradictory and confusing, and the fruit is not solid faith in a perfect Bible. The fruit is uncertainty and constant shifting and a weakening of biblical authority. We believe this entire approach to the Scripture is wrong-headed. Its foundation is not faith in God, but faith in

human scholarship. That is a very weak reed upon which to lean! Consider, as an example of what I am talking about, what F.F. Bruce says about the Gospels:

"In this country [England] the explanation commonly given last century was that the identity or similarity of language was due to the fact that the evangelists reproduced the language of the primitive oral gospel which was proclaimed in the early days of the Church. This is the view put forward, for example, in Alford's Greek Testament and in Westcott's Introduction to the Study of the Gospels. This theory later fell into disfavour, as it was realized that many of the phenomena could be more adequately explained by postulating documentary sources; BUT THERE WAS AND IS A GREAT DEAL TO BE SAID FOR IT, and it was reappeared in our own day in a somewhat different form in the approach known as Form Criticism. ...

"Closer study of the linguistic and literary details of the Gospels in more recent times has led many scholars to the conclusion that Mark was actually the oldest of our Synoptic Gospels in their final form, and that it was a source of both Matthew and Luke" (Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?, pp. 31,34).

In our estimation, all "form criticism" is based on unbelief, regardless of what the individual scholar professes to believe about the Bible. It is largely speculation, anyway. That is why the theories change every few years. That is why there are so many different theories of textual criticism. Form criticism is a scholar's game. The Bible says nothing about supposed human sources upon which Matthew and Luke are founded, whether they be "primitive oral gospel" or an unidentified "Q" document or Mark's gospel or whatever. Matthew and Luke were not left to their own devices to try to write an accurate depiction of Christ. They were not dependent upon any human source. The Lord Jesus promised to guide them into all truth (John 16:13), and that is precisely what He did. Matthew and Luke recorded the very words of God. There is no reason to believe they used or needed any "sources" apart from divine inspiration. To debate about such "sources" is to enter into the realm of human speculation, and at best is a waste of time.

The proper approach to Scripture is described in 1 Thessalonians: "... when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, YE RECEIVED IT NOT AS THE WORD OF MEN, BUT AS IT IS IN TRUTH, THE WORD OF GOD, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13)